

## *Personal to Political: Celebrating the African American Artists of Paulson*

### *Fontaine Press*

April 15 – June 24

#### Opening Reception:

Sunday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 3-5pm

**Walnut Creek, CA-** The Bedford Gallery's 2017-18 season is dedicated to exploring cultural perspectives, and our visual journey continues this spring with *Personal to Political: Celebrating the African American Artists of Paulson Fontaine Press*.



This exciting exhibition features works by African American artists who have helped to shape the contemporary art conversation in the Bay Area and beyond. The show covers a wide range of prints, paintings, quilts, and sculptures, and includes an array of abstract and formal imagery. Narratives that speak to personal experiences and political perspectives are woven throughout. At the heart of this show is a Berkeley based fine art print studio—**Paulson Fontaine Press**—who over the past two decades has developed an unparalleled roster of internationally celebrated artists - artists like Martin Puryear, Kerry James Marshall, and the Gee's Bend Quilters – who characterize the fresh perspectives that are today's avant-garde.

This exhibition is organized by the Bedford Gallery and will travel nationally through 2021.

#### About Paulson Fontaine Press

Established in 1996, Paulson Fontaine Press, formerly Paulson Bott Press, is known for amplifying important, often underrepresented, voices in the visual arts. In 1997, after hearing the painter Kerry James Marshall give a talk about the dearth of Black voices and representation in major museums and art institutions co-founder Pam Paulson realized there was a vacuum to be filled.

Through their fine art publishing program, Paulson Fontaine Press reaches new audiences for African American artists across the country. Artists include Chicago based McArthur Binion who is known for bringing a personal narrative into the reductive materialism of minimalism; Samuel Levi Jones, known for compositions created from deconstructed institutional texts; Bay Area artist Lava Thomas, whose multidisciplinary practice considers themes of social justice, female subjectivity, current events and the shifting tides of history; As well as Edgar Arceneaux, a Los Angeles native who has been a pivotal leader of the Watts House Project, an effort to revitalize the Watts community through art.

About the importance of this focus at the press, Rhea Fontaine states: "People like William Arnett, who supported the Gee's Bend Quilters, and Lowery Stokes Sims, whose pioneering work at the Metropolitan Museum and the Studio Museum in Harlem introduced so many minority artists to larger audiences. These are the



people who are taking risks that others aren't willing to take, saying things that other people aren't willing to say, seeing things that other people are not seeing. We've always tried to connect ourselves with that type of visionary. Because of them, a number of extremely talented artists have become known to us and the world at large."

<http://paulsonfontaine.com/>

### Featured Artists:



**Gee's Bend Quilters:** Gee's Bend is a small, rural African American community that is surrounded on three sides by the Alabama River. The women of Gee's Bend create quilted masterpieces that are both functional and unique, and combine artisanship and ingenuity. Their storied crafting tradition dates back to the 1920s, and their works—created out of necessity for their homes—are an inspiring and vital part of American art history.

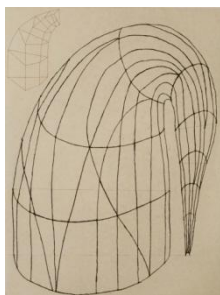
In addition to prints, this exhibition includes quilts by the Gee's Bend Quilters.



**David Huffman:** David Huffman depicts the African American experience and "the stereotypical signifiers of this history." He uses humor to bridge fantasy and reality with his depictions of figures in astronaut garb (known as Traumanauts), conducting their daily activities. On the surface, some of the Traumanaut images are playful, but a deeper look reveals Huffman's perspective on politics, culture and our relationship to the earth and urban environments.



**Kerry James Marshall:** Born in Alabama in 1955 and raised in Watts, Los Angeles, Kerry James Marshall's work delves into the history of African American identity. He explores political themes and focuses on Western art and its absence of black subjects. His paintings bring people to the forefront who have previously been invisible—the African American woman, artist, master and actor.



**Martin Puryear:** Sculptor, Martin Puryear's love of natural materials and traditional crafting methods employ wood, mesh, stone and metal to create forms that resist identification. As one of the most lauded contemporary artists, Puryear's work has been exhibited across the country at the MOMA New York and National Gallery of Art. His list of awards includes a Guggenheim Fellowship, a MacArthur Foundation award, the Gold Medal in Sculpture by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the National Medal of Arts.



**Lava Thomas:** Lava Thomas's work is influenced by themes of social justice and feminist discourse, past and present. Her hair portraits and mirrored tambourines are quintessentially personal. They are also strongly political, depicting the nature of who we are and how we express ourselves to the larger world.

Images and additional information about *Personal to Political* are available in our [Electronic Press Kit](#)

### **Participating Artists:**

Edgar Arceneaux, Radcliffe Bailey, McArthur Binion, Gee's Bend Quilters (Louisiana Bendolph, Mary Lee Bendolph, Loretta Bennett, Loretta Pettway), Lonnie Holley, David Huffman, Samuel Levi Jones, Kerry James Marshall, Martin Puryear, Gary Simmons, Lava Thomas.

### **Opening Reception:**

**Sunday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 3-5pm. \$5 Admission.**

Join us for our opening reception and complimentary wine and hors d'oeuvres. Refreshments hosted by our Bedford Gallery Guild and supported by JP Morgan Chase and Wente Vineyards.

### **Traveling Exhibition Schedule**

After its debut at the Bedford, the Gallery will travel *Personal to Political* nationally for over three years:

**Krasl Art Center, St. Joseph, MI** September 1 - November 25, 2018

**Gallery 360 at Northeastern University, Boston, MA** January 16 - March 17, 2019

**Las Cruces Museum of Art, Las Cruces, NM** May 10 - July 20, 2019

**Museum of Arts and Sciences, Daytona FL** August 31 - October 27, 2019

**Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, Detroit, MI** November 23 - April 5, 2020

**Knoxville Museum of Art, Knoxville, TN** May 7 - August 2, 2020

**Art Museum of West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV** August 29 - December 13, 2020

**DeVos Art Museum, North Michigan University, Marquette, MI** August 16 - October 31, 2021

### **General Information**

**Location:** Inside the Leshler Center for the Arts at 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek, four blocks south of the Walnut Creek BART station.

**Telephone:** (925) 295-1417

**Email:** [galleryinfo@bedfordgallery.org](mailto:galleryinfo@bedfordgallery.org)

**Website:** [www.bedfordgallery.org](http://www.bedfordgallery.org)

**Admission:** General \$5; Youth (17 and under) \$3; Children 12 and under, free; First Tuesdays are free; Free for ticket holders to events in the Leshler Center for the Arts on ticketed date.

**Hours:** Tuesday through Sunday, Noon to 5:00 pm, and 6:00 - 8:00 pm on evenings when there are theater productions in the LCA. The Gallery is closed on Mondays.

**Tours:** to book an exhibition tour call or email: (925)295-1416 or [gallerytours@bedfordgallery.org](mailto:gallerytours@bedfordgallery.org)

Bedford Gallery, a program of the City of Walnut Creek, receives funding from the **Diablo Regional Arts Association** and the **Leshler Foundation**. All school tours and opening receptions are sponsored by **JP Morgan Chase & Co.**

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